

Mass. AG Maura Healey promises beefed up presence near MGM Springfield casino, calls for gaming commission to establish office in city

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Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey ran for office as an anti-casino candidate and as she makes her way through her first year of office, she is **promising tough oversight** and calling on another state agency to up the ante regarding its efforts.

Healey is pledging pledged to dedicate additional resources to her Springfield office to keep an eye on the nearby MGM Resorts International casino, which is being developed on 14.5 acres a block away from the attorney general's spot in the MassLive building. She is also calling on the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to establish a Springfield office to have a presence in the city where the multinational corporation will run its estimated \$800 million casino complex.



Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey testifies before the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015, in Boston where she promised a strict interpretation of the 2011 Expanded Gaming Act which legalized casino gaming in the commonwealth. (AP Photo/Steven Senne) (Steven Senne)

Elaine Driscoll, a spokesperson for the commission, said there are already plans to "establish a full-time presence in Springfield," but the details, including the timing of opening that office, are yet to be established.

Healey said as the MGM Springfield casino edges closer to opening its doors in 2017, it will be important to protect consumers as well as hold the company to the promises it made while campaigning locally and then state-wide against the referendum which failed to repeal the 2011 Expanded Gaming Act which paved the way for up to three casinos and a slots parlor in the commonwealth.

"I bring a real healthy skepticism to this industry," Healey told the State House News Service. "I have expressed my concerns about potential negative impacts on consumers, on workers; what we might see in terms of organized crime, money laundering, human trafficking and the like."

Healey didn't expand upon what a beefed up Springfield presence would specifically entail, beyond noting criminal investigators, prosecutors and consumer attorneys, but The Republican plans to speak with her next week to hash out the details.

MGM was awarded the sole Western Massachusetts casino license after a lengthy process which involved winning approval from a majority of the city's voters in July 2013 and an investigative background check process and hearings in front of the commission. The Commission also picked apart each facet of MGM's casino development plan and questioned company executives in public hearings which spanned the past few years.

MGM announced this week that it plans on **breaking ground with demolition of the old Zanetti school** on Howard Street on March 24 with the aim of **demolishing 18 other properties** by the end of 2015.

Penn National Gaming is preparing to open its \$225 million Plainridge Park Casino slots parlor in Plainville in approximately four months while Wynn resorts is acquiring the properties needed to break ground on its \$1.6 billion casino on the mystic River in Everett.